



Sally J. Clark
Seattle City Councilmember

November 5, 2009

Neighborhood Plan Advisory Committee
Seattle, WA

Dear Neighborhood Plan Advisory Committee,

Firstly, thank you for all of your work organizing the Status Report Open Houses happening later this month. It's a tremendous amount of work. I am very appreciative of all the volunteer time you put into hosting. I look forward to joining you for a few of the open houses.

Secondly, I am writing to you about the 2010 budget as it relates to neighborhood plan updates.

As you know, the Mayor's proposed neighborhood plan update program focused on the quarter mile area around the light rail stations in the Rainier Beach, Columbia City, and University District neighborhoods. The scope included an emphasis mostly on land use and transportation issues and presumed a one-year timeframe to update the next three neighborhood plans. Funding was not included for continuing facilitation of the Neighborhood Plan Advisory Committee.

Over the past month, I've reviewed the proposal with central staff, spoken with many of my colleagues, and Dan Nolte on my staff has relayed the discussions that you've had over the last couple of meetings where you've discussed recommendations for how neighborhood planning should move forward. Your feedback has been helpful as we face carrying this work forward with a new executive administration.

There are a few lingering questions and there are some differing opinions, so I've developed a draft "Statement of Legislative Intent" (SLI), which outlines a path forward, but also requests information back from the Executive before proceeding. Council is expected to vote on its adoption next week.

The SLI includes direction that:

- Council intends to update **two** neighborhood plans in the 2010 cycle. Those plans will be in neighborhoods that contain transit stations (not necessarily light rail stations). This is consistent with the legislation Council passed in 2008 authorizing the update work

- The next two neighborhood plans to be updated will be determined no later than December 18, 2009 through agreement between the Council and the Executive. I selected Dec. 18 so NPAC would have time to provide recommendations on this issue
- Council may provide direction for “mid-course corrections” for the 2010 process following Council’s review of the final Status Reports and the three neighborhood plans currently undergoing updates
- NPAC will be expected to finish work by December 31, 2009 and deliver written recommendations to Council

Secondly, based on some concerns I have, and many of the concerns you’ve raised with the proposal, the SLI directs the Executive to go back and develop a written proposal for Council review that addresses:

- How the Executive will provide for a more **broad-based approach** to updating neighborhood plans than assumed in the initial proposal that emphasized station areas
- How the 2010 update process will **involve neighborhoods in defining the scope** of the update process, building community participation and responsibility, and determining which issues and geographic areas within the neighborhood plan boundaries will be a priority focus for the plan updates
- What the Executive’s **proposed timeline** for completing new neighborhood plan updates, assuming a more broadly-scoped agenda? (the Council does not necessarily expect future neighborhood plan updates to be completed within a one-year timeframe).
- How the Executive intends to conduct **outreach and provide for on-going community partnership** in the update process, including, but not limited to, developing neighborhood-specific advisory groups to help guide the update process?

That written proposal is expected to be delivered for Council review no later than January 15, 2010.

I think this legislative action takes us in a good direction to ensure broad based, collaborative updates, and also provides us time to collaborate with our new Mayor as we begin the next round, whoever that might be.

I look forward to receiving your recommendations for criteria for choosing the next plan updates by early December. I feel it’s important to Councilmembers that neighborhoods with transit stations be selected as part of the next round of updates, but if you are able to provide a compelling reason that another neighborhood should be selected instead, I welcome the recommendation.

Dan also conveyed your recommendation about allowing neighborhoods to use city-approved consultants to do updates. As we know this has been an ongoing debate between the Council and Executive. I look forward to hearing the perspective of the new Mayor.

Lastly, and probably most important to you - the future of the Neighborhood Plan Advisory Committee. The Mayor delivered a budget without funding for NPAC in the 2010 cycle. After reviewing the mission for NPAC and talking with my colleagues, it sounds as though NPAC has completed its work. You've done a lot of smart, thoughtful and diligent work over the last year, and there are only a few items left to be completed in the resolution that established the group. I have faith in you and your co-chairs to work quickly and effectively over these last two months.

Please note that no one thinks that there can be no advisory committee. I've been exploring the idea of neighborhood-based advisory committees in the communities where updates are happening. I'm also exploring the Planning Commission participating in some way given its mission related to advising on growth planning. I've also directed the Executive to report back with ideas of their own. I look forward to hearing any other recommendations you may have.

Again, thank you for your work over this year. I've asked my staff to find a time on a December Planning, Land Use & Neighborhoods Committee agenda so you can report back to Councilmembers. You've done a tremendous job, sometimes in unity, sometimes through difficult debate. You should be proud of your service. There's no template for what a plan update should look like. This is uncharted territory for Seattle. Thank you for your work in helping shape the process to be as effective, transparent and community-driven as possible.

Please let either myself or Dan Nolte know if you have any questions.

Best regards,


Sally J. Clark
Seattle City Council